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Censor, as Macaulay is its Panegyrist, and Tennyson its Mirror. He has saturated his nation with a wholesome tonic, and the practice of any one of his precepts for the conduct of life is ennobling. More intense than Wordsworth, more intelligible than Browning, more fervid than Mill, he has indicated the pitfalls of our civilization. His works have done much to mould the best thinkers in two continents, in both of which he has been the Greatheart to many pilgrims."

London. By Walter Besant. With Illustrations. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1892. 8vo, pp. xv., 509.

THAT facile writer, Mr. Walter Besant, who is equally at home whether he is writing about Jerusalem or the East End of London, about Rabelais or the protection of struggling authors, about marriages in the Fleet or Sons of Vulcan, has certainly not fallen below his wonted plane of excellence in the volume before us. The nine chapters of which it is composed were originally contributed as articles to *Harper's Magazine*, and one is therefore not surprised to find occasional padding or traces of the effects of that impulse to write down to the level of the popular mind, which no veteran contributor to periodical literature can long escape. There are also traces of a slight flippancy natural enough in a successful and voluminous novelist, and there is too much laudation of our advanced nineteenth century civilization at the expense of those excellent ancestors whose labors made that civilization possible. Still Mr. Besant is not wanting in enthusiasm for these ancestors, and he not infrequently defends them against carping antiquaries. Then, too, he is not afraid to let his imagination play over the past of the London he loves, and so he not infrequently illuminates his subject. Besides, how could a charming and clever man like Mr. Besant fail to write a charming and clever book? He has not failed, very far from it.

Our author is careful to let his reader know in his preface

that he does not intend to write a history of London or a description of the modern city. If one wishes to learn something definite about the great city companies and their government one must still go to Loftie and the other authorities; if one wishes to hear the praises of the modern County Council sounded, one must go to Mr. Frederic Harrison and other enthusiasts. Mr. Besant intends simply to make himself a delightful guide through certain chief periods of the city's life and growth. He will discourse admiringly and mournfully of the great churches, monasteries, palaces, and hospitals that once rose where warehouses now stand; he will give us pictures of the citizen in his home, of the Lord Mayor in his pomp, of the rogue in his den; he will describe plagues and fires, and last, but not least, will retail much harmless, pleasant gossip and many romantic stories with an old-time flavor clinging to them. He will not, however, let his imagination run away with him, for he has had his Stow constantly beside him, he has examined old maps, pamphlets, and account books, and what is still better, has actually surveyed every step of the *terrain* about which he is to write. The reader may therefore feel certain that the book, which has proved such pleasant reading has also been useful reading.

In the first chapter, entitled "After the Romans," Mr. Besant holds decidedly the opinion to which Loftie leans, that when the Saxons entered London they found it a deserted city. The reasons he gives to support this opinion are weighty, but the vivid use of the imagination which he allows himself hardly tends to reassure a doubting or critical reader. It is not safe to mix up quotations from recognized authorities with descriptive passages that may have been taken from an unpublished historical novel, so far as their form and matter are concerned.

The second chapter, "Saxon and Norman," is naturally less full of interest than those that follow. Three chapters are then given to Plantagenet London, one devoted to ecclesiastical matters, another to the life and works of "prince

and merchant," a third to the every-day and holiday pursuits of the people at large. Where all is so good, it is hard to specify what is best; perhaps we like most the pages devoted to our old friend, Sir Richard Whittington. Tudor London gets only two chapters, but one of these is the best in the volume, containing, as it does, an account of the delightful walk Mr. Besant took with his noble and quaint old friend, the chronicler Stow. When an author has such an imagination and can use it so well as Mr. Besant, who would grumble at his indulging it?

The eighth chapter, on the London of Charles II., is interesting especially as containing accounts of the plague and fire. Mr. Besant is not confined to Pepys or De Foe, but quotes interestingly from rare pamphlets and account books. On the whole, however, it would seem that with the wealth of material at his hands he could have done better, and we hardly see any good reason for passing by Congreve and the other Restoration dramatists as he has done. The last chapter consists of notes on the capital as it existed under George II. Here, with the almost overabundance of materials, we can afford to put up with what the author frankly admits to be an incomplete sketch, and we must certainly thank him for the pages in which he exposes the exaggerated way in which we are accustomed to speak of the lethargy of the Church during the first part of the eighteenth century.

To conclude, Mr. Besant has done his work well, and it was work worth doing. The publishers have vied with him and have produced a volume which it is simply a privilege to glance over or to read through. There are a hundred and thirty excellent illustrations and—a rare thing in books of this kind—a good index. We only wonder that they should have issued a book so well adapted to serve the purposes of a gift-book out of the regular holiday season.